



*Compliments of*  
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California State Assembly

**Mary Salas**

ASSEMBLYMEMBER, 79TH DISTRICT

*Dear Friend,*

**D**id you know that according to the American Cancer Society, cervical cancer occurs most often in Hispanic women? It is also most commonly found in women between the ages of 35 and 65. However, there are measures that can be taken to help prevent cervical cancer.

Annual testing is recommended for women 21 years or older. Another way of preventing cervical cancer is by reducing exposure to the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

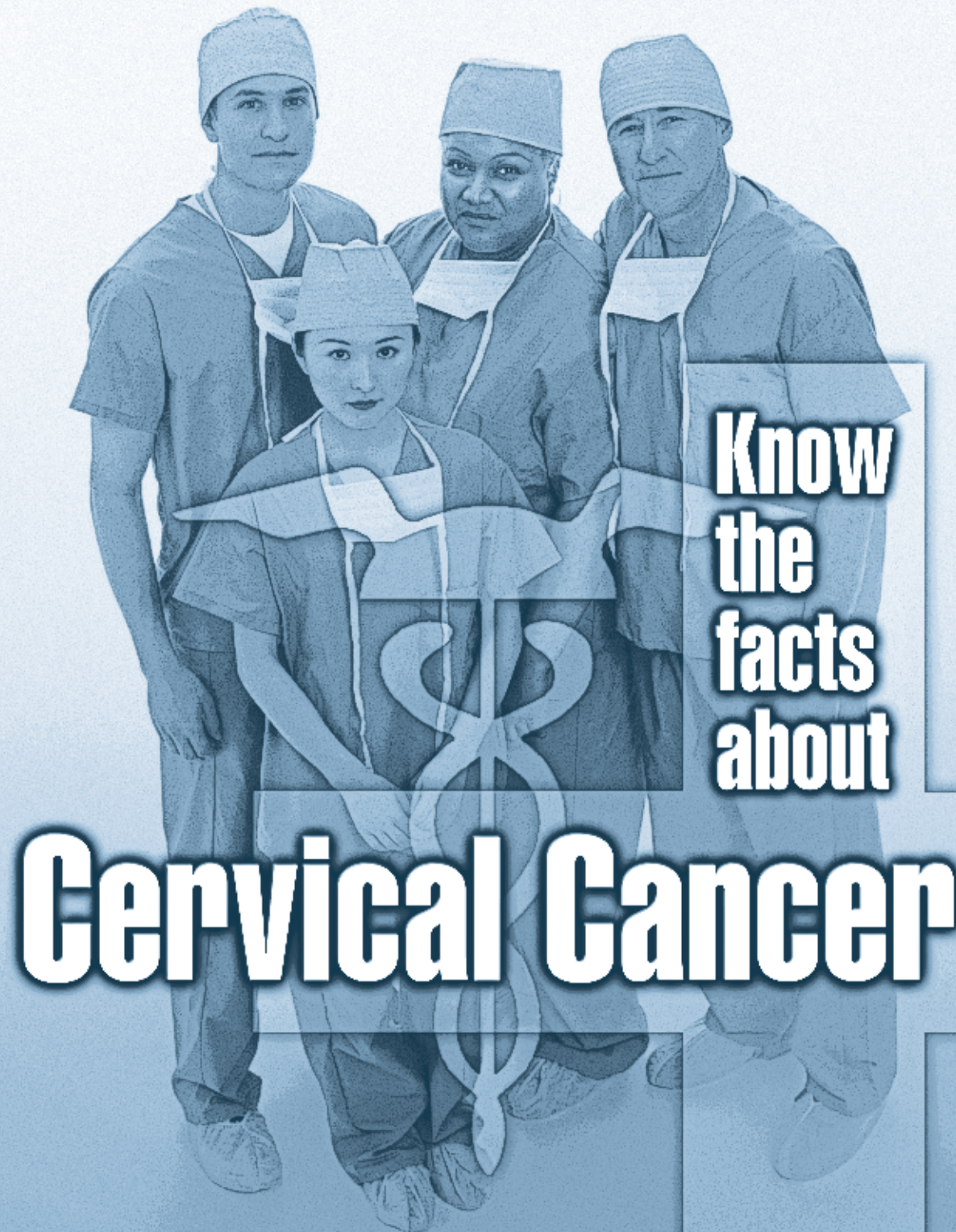
This brochure is designed to inform you of the symptoms and risks of cervical cancer. I also encourage you to take the time to discuss with your doctor ways of preventing and treating cervical cancer.

If you have any questions or comments regarding health related issues please contact my office at (619) 409-7979.

Sincerely,

**MARY SALAS**

Member of the State Assembly  
79th Assembly District





# Cervical Cancer: Know the facts

## Early Signs and Symptoms of Cervical Cancer

A Pap test, or Pap smear, is capable of picking up changes to the cervix before cancer develops. Symptoms of cervical cancer do not appear until the cancer has actually developed, which is much later than the early signs discovered in a Pap test. It may be years before abnormal, or pre-cancerous, cells develop into cancer. Any of the following symptoms should be reported to your doctor immediately:

- *Bleeding between periods.*
- *Abnormal or foul smelling vaginal discharge.*
- *Bleeding or pain during or after intercourse.*

Of course, these symptoms do not necessarily mean that you have cancer, but it is possible. Check with your doctor to determine what is causing your symptoms.

## Statistics on Cervical Cancer

Each year in America, about 12,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and 3,700 women die of it. Cervical cancer is the second major cause of cancer related mortality in women worldwide.

While cervical cancer incidence and mortality rates have declined in the United States by approximately 50 percent over the past three decades, the disease remains a serious health threat among women.

## Risk Factors for Cervical Cancer

The Pap test is primarily a preventive measure designed to detect early changes in the cells of the cervix. Abnormal cells that are not cancerous but may lead to cancer are called cervical intra-epithelial neoplasia, or CIN. These pre-cancerous cells can develop into cancer, if left untreated. The vast majority of women with CIN, however, do not develop cancer. The CIN are usually the result of infection with the “human papillomavirus,” or HPV, a virus that is generally sexually transmitted. It is a common virus that most women have at some point during their lives. Usually, the immune system gets rid of HPV without the woman ever knowing it was there. Of the 80-90 types of the virus, 4 can cause CIN in the cells of the cervix, and in a few of these cases, the CIN, if left untreated, will develop into cancer. The risk factors for CIN include the following:

- *Failure to have regular Pap tests.*
- *Early age of first intercourse.*
- *Multiple sexual partners or a sexual partner who has had multiple sexual partners.*
- *A weakened immune system, which can be caused by smoking, poor diet or other infections, such as HIV.*
- *A mother who was given the drug diethylstilbestrol, or DES, during pregnancy to prevent miscarriage.*

## National Cancer Institute Recommendations

- *Screenings should begin three years after a woman begins having sexual intercourse, but no later than 21 years old.*
- *Women should have a Pap test at least once every three years.*
- *Women 65 to 70 years of age who have had at least three normal Pap tests and no abnormal Pap tests in the last 10 years may decide, with their doctor, to stop cervical cancer screenings.*
- *Women who have had a total hysterectomy do not need to undergo screenings.*

## Further Tests for Cervical Cancer

If your Pap test shows an ambiguous or minor abnormality, your doctor may repeat the test to ensure its accuracy. If significant abnormalities are found, your doctor will want to perform other tests, such as the following:

**Colposcopy** — This is a widely used method to detect abnormal changes in the cervix. The doctor applies a vinegar-like solution to the cervix and then closely examines the vagina and the cervix using a colposcope, an instrument much like a microscope. The colposcope does not enter the body, and the procedure can be done in the doctor’s office.

**Schiller Test** — During the colposcopy, the doctor coats the cervix with an iodine solution. Healthy cells turn brown, and abnormal cells turn white or yellow. This is also done in the doctor’s office.

**Biopsy** — The doctor removes a small amount of cervical tissue for examination by a pathologist. In one type of biopsy, the doctor uses an instrument to pinch off small pieces of tissue. Another method

is called a loop electrosurgical excision in which the doctor uses an electric wire loop to slice off a thin, round piece of tissue. Both types of biopsies may be done in the doctor’s office using local anesthesia. A biopsy is the only way to tell for certain if the abnormal cells in the cervix are pre-cancerous, cancerous, or neither.

## Resources for Information on Cervical Cancer

**American Cancer Society**  
Toll free: 1-800-ACS-2345  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**National Cancer Institute’s Cancer Information Service**  
Toll free: 1-800-4CANCER or 1-800-422-6237  
TTY (for the deaf and hard of hearing): 1-800-332-8615  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

**National Cervical Cancer Coalition**  
Toll free: 1-800-685-5531  
[www.nccc-online.org](http://www.nccc-online.org)

